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ABSTRACT

Literacy education volunteers during 1988 numbered 77,000, two-thirds of whom served as tutors in basic literacy and English-as-a-second-language classes. The other third served in supportive roles as administrators, recruiters, teacher aides, counselors, and providers of child care and transportation. The number of volunteers rose from 34,500 in 1985. New York, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Kentucky, and Tennessee used more volunteers than other states during 1988. Effective recruitment strategies included posters, fliers, radio and television spots, hotlines, newspapers, and presentations to community and church groups. Major agencies that provided linkage with states included Laubach Literacy Action, Literacy Volunteers of America, Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS), Retired Senior Volunteer Program, ACTION's VISTA Volunteer Literacy Corps, state and local libraries, and state literacy councils. Volunteers usually received 12-18 hours of training. Section 353 of the Adult Education Act requires states to spend at least 10 percent of their funds on special experimental demonstration and teacher training projects. More than 38 states have organized a state literacy council or coalition that is most often involved in activities such as linking with literacy volunteer groups. Special efforts are being made in Florida and other states to increase the efforts of volunteers. Among organizations' concerns about volunteers have been the difficulty of retaining volunteers, the need for in-depth orientation, and the lack of sufficient inservice training. (The document includes a table of trend data and two charts.) (CML)

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VOLUNTEERISM IN ADULT EDUCATION

STATUS REPORT OF ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY VOLUNTEERS

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Office of Educational Research and Improvement
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MAY 1989

STATUS REPORT OF ADULT EDUCATION AND LITERACY VOLUNTEERS

DEFINITION

What is a volunteer? According to the Random House College Dictionary, 1984, a volunteer is "a person who performs a service willingly and without pay."

Who are the volunteers? They are teachers, executives, engineers, ex-governors, lawyers, retirees, counselors, nurses, church members, and other concerned citizens. Volunteers live in communities where adult education programs are located.

ROLES VOLUNTEERS PLAY

States use volunteers in a variety of settings. In addition to the traditional role as tutors, volunteers also serve in supportive roles. (See Appendices B and C.)

Tutors

Almost two-thirds, or 48,000 of the 77,000 volunteers in 1988 served as tutors in basic literacy and English as a second language classes on an individual basis, primarily in the 0-4 grade levels. A few tutors served in small group settings. To broaden outreach to serve a greater number of adult learners, South Carolina is developing a handbook on how to coordinate larger group tutoring efforts. Other states such as Missouri, Wyoming, and Nebraska are carrying out peer tutoring approaches, particularly in prison settings.

States reported that the personal relationship which often develops in tutoring the adult learner places the volunteer tutor in the role of mentor, confidant, role model, and trusted builder of self-esteem; and that when these relationships develop, students stay in the program longer and are more likely to complete their goals.

Supportive Roles

In 1988, almost one-third or 29,000 volunteers served in supportive roles. Such roles include administration, outreach and recruitment, teacher aides, counseling, and provision of child care and transportion.

TREND DATA

States have shown a significant gain in the mobilization of literacy volunteers to assist in expanding the adult education delivery system. Findings from States' reports (excluding one State: California) indicate that in 1988, about 77,000 literacy volunteers served in the State-administered adult education program

as compared to 34,500 in 1985 (See Table A - Trend Data). These data show a 119 percent increase over a four-year span.
Last year (FY 1988), the greatest use of volunteers occurred in five States:

- o New York - 9,700
- o Pennsylvania - 6,735
- o Minnesota - 5,994
- o Kentucky - 5,000
- o Tennessee - 4,125

RECRUITMENT

Volunteer recruitment efforts are made at both the State and local levels. Effective recruitment strategies implemented by States include posters, fliers, radio and television spots, hotlines, newspapers, and presentations for community and church groups. Linking with agencies and organizations that provide related services also allows States to reach more adult learners.
Major agencies and organizations which provide linkages with States include Laubach Literacy Action (LLA), Literacy Volunteers of America, Inc. (LVA), Project Literacy U.S. (PLUS), Retired Senior Volunteer Program (RSVP), ACTION'S VISTA Volunteer Literacy Corps, State and local libraries, and State Literacy Councils.

Since the beginning of PLUS in 1986, nearly every State reports that the PLUS campaign has been successful in recruiting students and volunteers. Continued media interest and the success of the PLUS awareness and outreach efforts resulted in the formation of 377 community task forces in 50 States and Territories. One hundred and seventeen national organizations have joined to work with PLUS, publicizing the effort and establishing PLUS as a priority for their members across the country. However, it is impossible to determine the precise number of individuals who volunteered to work with adults in need of higher literacy skills as a direct result of the PLUS initiative.

ACTION'S VISTA Volunteer Literacy Corps also plays an important role in the fight against illiteracy. To date, over 300 VISTA volunteers serve in nearly two-thirds of the States. Their duties focus on establishing local literacy councils, recruiting and training volunteers, and public relations.

"Project Literacy Your Turn" is a videotape developed by Oregon to recruit literacy volunteers. Public service announcements (PSA) are aired on television to correspond with PLUS's PSAs. This effort resulted in recruiting an additional 700 volunteers.

TRAINING

After the volunteers have been recruited, they are provided training, particularly if they are to tutor adults. The training may be provided by a local adult education staff or by local literacy councils affiliated with LLA and LVA. Volunteers receive a designated number of hours of training, usually about 12 to 18 hours, and assistance in using the materials which the local program has recommended.

SECTION 353 SPECIAL PROJECTS

Section 353 of the Adult Education Act requires States to spend at least 10 percent of their funds on special experimental demonstration and teacher training projects. Among the 400 plus Section 353 projects funded last year, 28 focused on the use of volunteers in Adult Basic Education progams. In addition to the 28 volunteer projects, 32 projects have volunteer components. More than $1.5 million has been invested in the projects by 25 States. A list of these projects has been developed by the Division of Adult Education, entitled, VOLUNTEERS: A Compilation of Section 353 Volunteer Literacy Programs for 1988.

A Section 353 product was developed by the Nebraska State Department of Education, entitled Using the All-Volunteer Concept in Adult Basic Education to Serve the Hard to Reach Student. The booklet includes topics such as recruitment, interviewing, training, orientation, and evaluation. Also described in the booklet are steps a volunteer leader should follow to establish a structured ABE all-volunteer program which allows for involvement of all sectors of the community. These two publications are available from the Clearinghouse on Adult Education. (See address on page 5.)

STATE LITERACY INITIATIVE

Over 38 States have organized a State literacy council or coalition, and several are on their way to achieving such organizations. These councils are made up of a broad spectrum of representatives from businesses and industries, Governors' Offices, local literacy councils, LVA and LLA affiliates, State and local libraries, Offices on the Aging, State Adult Education Offices, and concerned citizens. Virtually every State reports involvement in adult literacy initiatives. They are most often involved in activities as listed below.

- o linking with literacy volunteer groups
- o funding local literacy volunteer groups directly
- o taking lead roles in coordination efforts
- o working as partners with Governors' Offices

- o funding interagency staff development and training activities
- o forging strong linkages with State libraries
- o linking with business and industry, Offices on Aging, and the departments of social services

SPECIAL EFFORTS BY STATES

Special efforts are being taken by many States to increase the use of volunteers. Florida's State legislation which created the Adult Literacy Plan, speaks of the "Utilization of training of volunteer instructors", and "progress toward a more individualized literacy instruction by reducing class size." In response to the legislation, many ABE programs and volunteer programs in Florida have merged or entered into partnership agreements. The State says that these cooperative efforts have been beneficial to both groups. Adult education programs provide certified teachers, classroom instruction, and test services, while the volunteers give students individual attention--resulting in greater student retention.

State legislation also has been enacted to provide funds for volunteer activities in a few States. The $480,000 allocation in Washington State allowed the Adult Education office to hire 24 volunteer coordinators to recruit and train volunteers and to establish local literacy councils. In Nebraska and Pennsylvania, $200,000 was allocated to each State, and $292,000 to Tennessee for the purposes of setting up and managing volunteer programs.

Additional funds through grant-making were received by many States for volunteer efforts. Some examples are given below.

- o Alabama - $75,000 from the public State Library to hire volunteer coordinators
- o Kentucky - $100,000 from Gannett Foundation with one-third for volunteer activities
- o Tennessee - $100,000 from Gannett Foundation and $500,000 from Appalachian Regional Commission to set up volunteer programs and hire literacy coordinators.

RECOGNITION FOR VOLUNTEERS

Most every State reports special recognition efforts for volunteers. The recognitions come in the form of awards, certificates, Volunteer of the Year trophies, and Governors' awards.

CONCERNS

Regarding the use of volunteers, the States have most often voiced their concerns about retention, the need for in-depth orientation, and the lack of sufficient in-service training. The States have been concerned that the available resources to carry out volunteer training are minimal; in fact, many times training for volunteers is provided on an annual basis. The States cited that additional resources for this area will provide regular training for volunteers to allow them to develop more professionally, and understand their own function in an organization, as well as others' roles in the program. In addition, volunteers will become more dedicated to the program, create a sense of purpose within the learning environment and stay with the program longer.

Ohio developed a videotape entitled "Orientation for Volunteers". This tape provides a step-by-step description on the roles and duties of volunteers in an ABE program. States that are interested in the videotape may contact Harry Meek, the State Director of Adult Education in Ohio. His address and telephone number are Associate Director, Adult & Community Education, Division of Educational Services, Ohio Department of Education, 65 S. Front Street, Room 812, Columbus, OH 43212; (618) 466-4962.

CONCLUSION

Many adult educators and practitioners as well as individuals are concerned about the plight of adults with low literacy levels. In the American spirit, volunteers are ready and willing to help in minimizing the number of illiterate adults. The incentive provided by adult education grants, and in particular the Section 353 monies, has resulted in a tremendous surge in volunteer activities. Activities such as developing effective resources, linking with public and private sectors, and cooperating with community-based organizations that provide related services have increased the use of volunteers significantly in adult education programs.

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TREND DATA

APPENDIX A

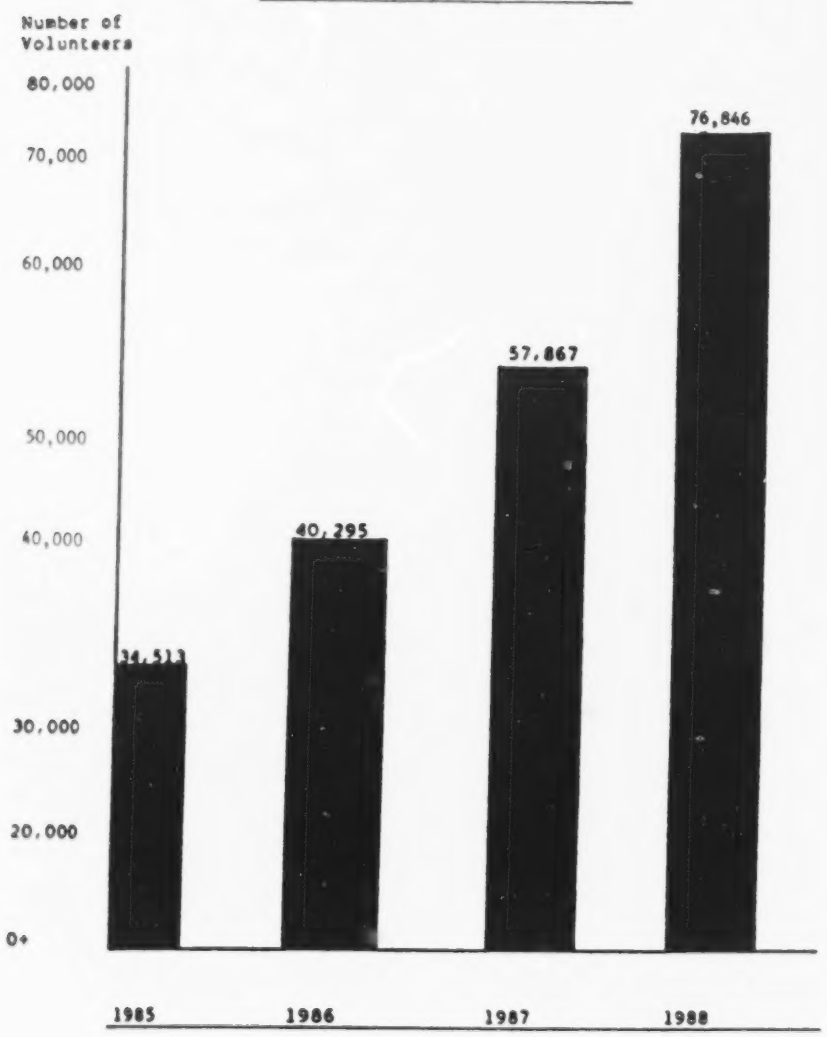
STATE	VOLUNTEERS IN ABE			
	85	86	87	88
Alabama	429	625	853	1,222
Alaska	346	453	510	783
Arizona	822	880	946	1,284
Arkansas	92	146	282	231
California	NA	NA	9,000	NA*
Colorado	100	498	974	985
Connecticut	2,169	2,228	2,713	2,950
Delaware	50	41	358	392
Florida	NA	635	1,540	1,947
Georgia	188	330	1,512	1,545
Hawaii	NA	85	124	226
Idaho	261	358	212	651
Illinois	1,915	1,800	1,752	1,748
Indiana	NA	635	1,048	365
Iowa	325	514	821	1,180
Kansas	298	423	835	1,112
Kentucky	3,254	558	754	5,000
Louisiana	384	630	593	296
Maine	73	223	319	1,052
Maryland	960	921	1,034	1,057
Massachusetts	307	495	540	1,529
Michigan	455	1,935	2,522	1,525
Minnesota	700	2,885	4,426	5,994
Mississippi	345	482	394	1,311
Missouri	150	472	899	1,017
Montana	47	61	141	165
Nebraska	1,102	1,017	1,562	1,726
Nevada	42	37	136	165
New Hampshire	789	797	909	937
New Jersey	1,429	1,559	3,095	1,887
New Mexico	150	520	1,033	1,318
New York	4,893	4,168	6,329	9,700
North Carolina	779	1,158	1,633	1,289
North Dakota	7	7	59	59
Ohio	NA	1,565	3,095	1,887
Oklahoma	65	59	50	43
Oregon	525	853	1,436	1,086
Pennsylvania	747	741	2,450	6,725
Rhode Island	569	708	673	602
South Carolina	4,059	4,687	3,230	3,451
South Dakota	59	55	100	102
Tennessee	2,479	1,473	3,003	4,125
Texas	684	903	1,823	2,229
Utah	21	NA	27	39
Vermont	150	39	150	126
Virginia	879	157	192	194
Washington	459	555	686	873
West Virginia	579	475	780	803
Wisconsin	88	105	NA	151
Wyoming	105	60	296	251
Dist. of Columbia	172	265	265	231
Puerto Rico	12	16	98	
Virgin Islands	NA	NA	50	20
	34,513	40,295	58,667	76,846

*Volunteer data was not included in the Annual Performance Report from the following State:

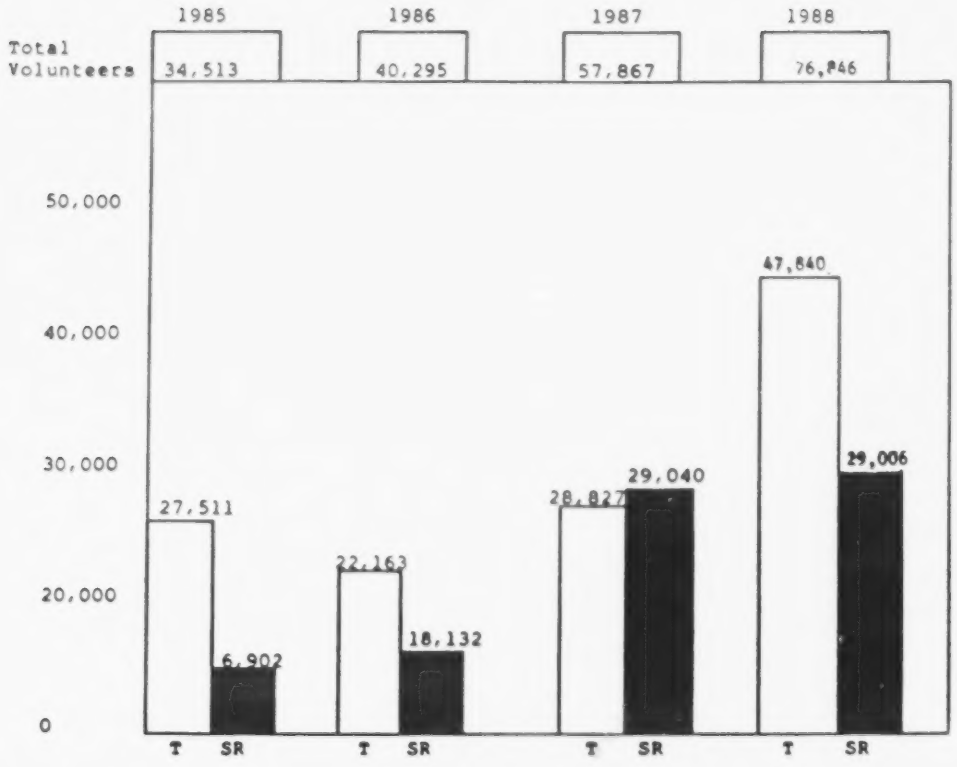
California

APPENDIX B

Trend data on volunteers in ABE



How Volunteers are Used



% of Supportive Roles 1985 - 20% 1986 - 44% 1987 - 50.2% 1988 - 40%

Supportive roles include administrative, child care, clerical, counselors, recruitment and outreach, teacher aides, and transportation.

T = Volunteer Tutors
SR = Supportive Roles